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AUTHOR Shultz, James A.
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ABSTRACT

A study of Founders Hall at the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) explores the history of that building and its symbolic role for the campus and the institution. The building was originally a residence built in the late 19th century and was later the location of the Richmond School of Social Work and Public Policy and of the Richmond Professional Institute. Founders Hall was designed in a French Second Empire architectural style and is in good condition for its age. An addition to the rear was not integrated in style or materials with the original building. The building is currently used for student contact services. A major interior renovation took place in the 1980s. Institutional materials on which much of the study was based had the limitation of "official sanction" which may have tended to cast the best historical light on events. Other institutional studies focused narrowly on repair and renovation or space analysis. Founders Hall appears to support VCU's image of itself as a venerable, prestigious institution and, in a city concerned with its historical appearance, as a preserver of historic buildings. (Contains 15 references.) (JB)

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ED 377 801

Colleges and Universities as Historic Institutions
A Study of the Historical Context of Campus Architecture:

FOUNDERS HALL

Virginia Commonwealth University

Richmond, Virginia

By James A. Shultz

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Setting

Founders Hall is located on what is presently known as the West or Academic Campus of Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia. The West Campus and East Campus (also known as the Medical College of Virginia Campus) are five miles apart. The East Campus is within the downtown core of Richmond. The West Campus is on the border between the core city and the residential neighborhoods to the west of the core. The University was founded in 1968 upon the merger of the Medical College of Virginia and Richmond Professional Institute. The Medical College was founded in 1838, and Richmond Professional Institute began in 1917 as the Richmond School of Social Work and Public Health. From 1925 to 1962 Richmond Professional Institute was a division of the College of William and Mary.

Both campuses reflect historical developments within the institution as well as modern construction to meet the needs of expanding enrollment and changing instruction and research strategies. On the East campus, historical structures, both University-owned and non-University-owned, are interwoven with several structures built within the past twenty years. For example, the White House of the Confederacy, not a part of the University, is within a few feet of both the University's Medical College of Virginia North Hospital and the Smith Building, housing the School of Pharmacy, both completed within the past five years. On the other hand, on the East Campus the University owns and occupies such historic structures as the Samuel and Stephen Putney Houses, which were built in the 19th century by the owners of Putney Shoe Manufacturing Company of Richmond.

In contrast to the East Campus the historic buildings on the West Campus are normally not intertwined with newer construction. The historic buildings owned and occupied by the University on this campus are found primarily along both sides of Franklin Street, which forms the northern boundary of a five square block campus area. Most of the newer construction is in the southern half of this square.

The oldest buildings were not constructed by the University's forerunner but were purchased by Richmond Professional Institute. For the most part they were large homes built

from the mid to late 19th century in what was then the western outskirts of Richmond. Today their use by the University is almost entirely for administrative and faculty office space. The few buildings built by Richmond Professional Institute were put up in the 1950's and early 1960's. Today one is used to house the Athletic Department and facilities for intercollegiate and intramural basketball and swimming, and another accommodates academic classroom space, administrative offices, a dining hall and a book store.

The newest buildings, constructed following the 1968 merger, are the largest of all and more uniform in construction materials and appearance. Almost all are sizeable, box-shaped structures of red brick. Today their uses include offices and classrooms for the Schools of Business and Education; a Fine and Performing Arts Center; a student center; and a general purpose academic building, including theater-style lecture rooms, small lecture rooms, and wet and dry lab space.

The general landscape of the West Campus consists of flat, tree-lined streets. Where trees were removed for construction of the new larger buildings, the University planted replacement trees, which are smaller than those near the historic houses on Franklin Street. On its West Campus the University places a priority on appearance and beautification, reflected by the fact that the Facilities Department has a separate unit devoted to landscaping and gardening. Replacement trees and shrubs are planted throughout the West Campus as needed, and flower beds of various species and colors are noticeable everywhere.

The Site and Spatial Relations

Founders Hall is at 827 West Franklin Street, on the southeast corner of the intersection of Franklin and Shafer streets. It is at the approximate mid point of the northern boundary of the campus, and is located within a few hundred feet of the buildings occupied by the offices of the University President and the University Provost.

Although the newest, larger campus buildings are within sight, Founders Hall is not situated near new buildings. Very large, tall, old trees line the streets nearby. Although obviously

quite old, the building has a bright, clean appearance, with signs that perhaps its brick and stone work were cleaned and repaired in recent years (see Exhibit I). It is a four story building with basement windows rising about half way above ground level. It appears to have originally been an old house or "mansion" because the doors and windows are not of the type typically found in commercial and institutional buildings. Looking back along each side and from the rear, it is apparent that the original structure was added to one or more times. A black metal fire escape stairway is attached to the east side, and from the west side the additions toward the rear of the original structure are clearly visible. The additions are three-story, box-like brick structures with windows spaced a standard distance apart. Although not new, the additions appear to have been built more recently than the original structure and have none of its ornamental brick, stone and woodwork (see Exhibit II).

The entire site is flat, although the earth has been mounded so that the sidewalk in front of the building is lower than the ground to the left and immediately in front of the building. Old trees tower in front, but recent landscaping is evident from the small and medium sized shrubs and trees bordering the building near the front and both sides. The building is bounded on the front by a sidewalk and a city street with heavy, quite speedy automobile traffic.

On the east side about 200 feet away is another old home that has been converted to University office space. To the west is Shafer Street, which has been closed to automobile traffic from Franklin Street running south. To the south is a paved alley with little or no motorized traffic except for University vehicles due to the fact that Shafer Street is closed to traffic. Students and other pedestrians heavily use the sidewalk in front of the building and in the closed-off street beside. This closed street runs approximately a block and a half toward the library and is a gathering place for students to socialize, rest, walk between classes, and gather for outdoor meetings and events. It appears that this "flow" of traffic and activity was deliberately planned by the University: the busy traffic of Franklin Street forms a border, and the closed-off portion of Shafer Street provides a natural channel away from the busy street toward the newer central part of the campus toward the south.

Vital Statistics

Founders Hall was originally built in the late 19th century as a residence. No documentation could be found to pinpoint irrefutably the exact date of construction or the designer. The official "house history" of Richmond Professional Institute, authored by its Director and later President from 1917 to 1959, Dr. Henry Hibbs, dates Founders Hall from "the 1880's" without noting a specific year or citing documentation. Dr. Hibbs also refers to it as "the Saunders-Willard House," claiming that the builders and first residents were Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Saunders. The name Willard is associated with the house, according to Dr. Hibbs, because Joseph E. Willard rented the house and lived there from the time the Saunders moved out (no date given) up to about 1915. Mr. Willard is notable for being lieutenant governor of Virginia for four years during this period, for serving on the State Corporation Commission, and for being appointed U.S. ambassador to Spain in 1913.

In 1991 two University students, Maria Epes and Catherine Nicholson, prepared a class project on Founders Hall for a course titled "The Design of Historic Architecture, Interiors, and Furnishings." As part of their project, Epes and Nicholson performed a deed search in the offices of the City of Richmond, and their study identifies deed book numbers and page numbers with references to 827 West Franklin Street, the current address of Founders Hall. The records they saw indicate the first structure was built on the property in 1882. However, they are uncertain that this is the "Saunders-Willard House" that was to become Founders Hall because the deeds list a Richard B. Chaffin as the owner of the property from January of 1880 to 1895. The fact that they did not find E. A. Saunders as owner is what led to their lack of confidence.

With Dr. Hibbs' reference to the Saunders-Willard House, he points out that the initials E. A. S. (E. A. Saunders) are etched in glass in a transom above the front entry door. I checked and, indeed, these initials still appear above the door. I believe it's quite possible Chaffin owned the property and had the house built, but the house was built for the Saunders, they were the first occupants, and they rented the house. I support this conclusion with the fact that Willard

apparently rented rather than owned the house while he lived there and with the fact that Epes and Nicholson refer to their finding of the deeds at this same address transferring ownership of the property to the Richmond School of Social Work and Public Health and later to the College of William and Mary. Interestingly enough, Dr. Hibbs says the School "took possession" in June of 1925, whereas the students' report shows the date of deed transfer as 1927.

The Richmond School of Social Work and Public Policy's move to Founders Hall is an important event in the history of the institution for two reasons. First, it marks the beginnings of the permanent physical location of the institution on Franklin Street and the first presence on what has become the West Campus of Virginia Commonwealth University. Between its founding in 1917 and 1925 the School was successively in three locations, entirely within one building each time. The first was in a former private residence on the site where the Virginia State Library is now located. The second, another former residence, was along Broad Street on property now a part of the University's East Campus. Immediately before moving west to Franklin Street the School was located on Fifth Street across from the YWCA near the present site of the Richmond Coliseum.

The second important aspect of the School's relocation to Founders Hall relates to its affiliation with The College of William and Mary. Almost from its beginning in 1917, according to Dr. Hibbs, the School had various arrangements with William and Mary, including having William and Mary faculty teach some evening classes. Also, some William and Mary students took classes at the School in specialties offered there. It was not, however, until immediately after the School's move west to Franklin Street that it became officially linked to William and Mary as the "Richmond Division." A formal relationship lasted in one form or another for the next thirty-seven years.

After the move to Franklin Street, "the look" of Founders Hall soon became symbolic of the institution (see Exhibit III). Also, according to Dr. Hibbs, the building was immediately named Founders Hall.

Exterior

The overall first floor dimensions of Founders Hall are approximately 100' X 130'. This includes the additions to the original structure. The original structure has four stories, although the fourth is much smaller than the others because it is made up of the space enclosed by the roof structure. The additions each have three stories. In addition, both the original structure and the additions have basements.

Generally considered "Victorian" in style, as are most of the preserved 19th century homes on Franklin Street, Founders Hall is classified specifically as "French Second Empire" in the Epes and Nicholson study. The distinguishing feature according to them is the "mansard roof": "Decorative patterns of color or texture in the roofing materials." In my judgement the appearance of the original structure is very attractive due to its first and second floor bay windows on the front and west sides; the variation in architectural patterns around the roof line, front porch and entry way; and its pleasing blend of red brick, gray stone and wood materials. The additions to the rear are constructed from red brick and concrete (for the window sills and mantels) and are functional but unattractive.

Overall the building appears to be in excellent condition for its age. The brick and stone work appears to have been cleaned and repaired recently although there are seam separation lines running in a few places within the brick work of the walls. In addition, the wood work seems to have benefitted from good care over the years and recent painting.

Monuments and Icons

Other than the fact that the building itself is "symbolic" of the University's past, I found little in the way of monuments and icons, particularly on and around the exterior. As documented in Exhibit III, the front view soon became symbolic of Richmond Professional Institute. In his history of Richmond Professional Institute Dr. Hibbs notes that an illustrator for the Saturday Evening Post once portrayed the front of Founders Hall in a drawing symbolizing life in the south immediately after the Civil War. This is an example of one of Dr. Hibbs' many attempts in his book

to link the Institute with an important, historic past, even though there is no direct link to the Institute's history or to the history of higher education in general. A more important point he tried to make in his book was how the Institute "move into" the existing structures in the area rather than demolish old and build new buildings. Perhaps this is a case of higher education adapting to its environment rather than creating and shaping a new environment to meet its needs and objectives.

While on a walk-through of the building during the week of September 14, 1992, the only symbol I noted was the University's current logo painted on a movable plywood wall in the basement. It appears the basement is used for a variety of things with no fixed, ongoing purpose. At the time I was there a line of students was snaking its way from Shafer Street through the west side door to the basement for the purpose of processing fall semester add/drop requests. After waiting in line a long time, the students may not have had the most positive thoughts and feelings to associate with the University's logo when they reached their final destination in the basement.

Alterations

The substantial and obvious additions to the rear of the building are noted in previous sections of this report. No attempt appears to have been made to integrate style and materials with the older part of the structure. The brick work at the rear of the addition, however, is not uniform. The bricks at lower levels appear more worn and slightly larger than the bricks at higher levels (see Exhibit IV). Also, the walls along the rear are not all the same height. Based on these observations, it seems that the additions could have been built on top of and beside existing brick structures that may have been associated with the original structure before 1925. Some possibilities are horse stables and other out buildings.

Interior

According to University records, Founders Hall has 34,000 gross square feet and 17,700 assignable square feet. The building is presently used for student contact administrative

activities, for selected enrollment support functions, and for the administrative offices of continuing education, public service and non-traditional academic programs. The basement is unfinished and is used for a variety of purposes, depending on seasonal needs and the time of year. The basement is also used for temporary storage as needed, and a substantial portion of the space is devoted to the building's central utility equipment.

The first floor has approximately 22 rooms and offices. Three significant student access functions are on the first floor. This appears to be well suited to Founders Hall because of its central location on the campus and its relationship to daily student life activities. Student service functions on the first floor include a Student Records Service Counter, a Registration Service Counter, and a Cashier's Office Window. In addition, the first floor houses offices and student advising / consultation rooms for Adult and Non-Traditional Programs, Evening and Summer Programs, Off-Campus Programs, the Bachelor of General Studies Program, and the Master of Interdisciplinary Studies Program. Finally, the first floor has offices and file space for University Enrollment Service Course Scheduling and Off-Campus Registration functions. The first floor seems well suited to serve the student access functions. Entrances on both Franklin and Shafer Streets are well marked and have wide double doors. However, only the Shafer Street entrance includes handicapped ramp access.

The second floor is occupied by the administrative offices of the Vice Provost for Continuing Studies and Public Service and the Center for Public Service. There are approximately 28 rooms and offices on this floor. All of the activities located on the first floor, with the exception of the enrollment and cashiering functions, as well as all functions on the second floor are under the responsibility of the Vice Provost for Continuing Studies and Public Service. Although many of the Vice Provost's areas of responsibility are located in Founders Hall, some are in other buildings on the West Campus.

The third floor is devoted entirely to Enrollment Services Records and Registration administrative offices and file space. It has approximately 24 rooms and in appearance is more "employee oriented" than student oriented like the other floors. It does not appear that there are

any student walk-up activities on the third floor, and soft drink and snack vending machines for the employees are located here. Also, there is a small lounge and eating area for employees near the snack machines.

The fourth floor is quite small compared to the others, as it is bounded by the shape and dimensions of the building's roof structure. There are approximately 10 rooms here with lower ceilings than the other floors, and none of the rooms appear to be in active use. It seems to be used for miscellaneous storage of empty boxes, old furniture and the like. However, evidence of active use at one time is there, including electrical outlets and scars and outlines left on walls where furniture and fixtures once were. Also, several of the rooms have mural paintings on the walls, with scenes of city scapes and random geometrical shapes and patterns of various colors. This could suggest that small art classes were once held here, that students or teachers used them as art studios, or that the space was used for art department administrative offices.

The first and second floors appear to have been recently refurbished: the original wood work gleams from a recent coat of varnish; the walls are a bright, clean, pleasant pale yellow; and all areas are well lighted, with the light fixtures appearing to be of 1980's and 1990's vintage. A review of related University records and reports reveals that a "major interior renovation," costing approximately $3,000,000, was undertaken in the 1980's, with the building ready for re-occupancy in 1987. The official description in the project proposal stated that the renovation was to be undertaken primarily to provide space for Continuing Education and other public service functions: "The historic significance and central location will provide an excellent adaptive-reuse project that will enable the University to eliminate expensive off-campus rental property and provide a proper environment for very important functions of the University."

Additional Questions

A question raised by viewing Founders Hall is the obvious lack of congruity in appearance between the original structure and the additions on the rear. They are obviously out of sync with each other. Why would the institution put on an addition that seems so incompatible with the

existing structure? At the time it was done, what was the historical context and surrounding circumstances? Why was it built in this style and not more like the existing structure? Why was a decision made to build an addition rather than build in a different location? What academic / instructional, extracurricular, and administrative objectives did it serve then? Is it still compatible with those same needs today? How did it affect or constrain later potential and actual uses of the building?

Elaboration and Confirmation

The appropriate historical records would seem to be those that document the history and purpose of the institution when it first took possession of the building and then accounts and interpretations of how the building was used over time and its significance in the life of the institution to the present. Good sources would seem to be reliable house histories, administrator and student memoirs, and any scholarly secondary studies dealing with the history of the institution. Other possibilities are scholarly and otherwise reliable studies of the City of Richmond or this particular area of the city, and studies of historic structures, because Founders Hall has a previous and continuing life of its own somewhat separate from the institution, being a residence before the institution moved to this area of the city and being a part of "city life" as well as institutional life.

Useful primary sources might be institutional files and records, official city files and records, museum archives since the building is located in a historic area, city and student newspaper accounts, institutional catalogues and announcements, student year books, and "special collections" or "archives" files that the institution might have within its library system.

The Living Past

The best readily available source of information about the historic uses of Founders Hall is Dr. Henry Hibbs' A History of the Richmond Professional Institute. Dr. Hibbs was Director and later President of the Institute from 1925 to 1959. Its strengths are that it has a considerable

amount of detail about the uses of Founders Hall in particular and it has the broader outline of overall institutional development, program expansion and financial history for the period. Its weaknesses are that it has the inherent point of view of an official house history written by its administrative head and that it is primarily in the vein of a memoir, with very little reference to primary sources and documentation for the investigator needing to pursue the subject further.

According to Dr. Hibbs, all School operations were housed in Founders Hall after its move there and for the first several years thereafter. The first floor housed the President's office, a library and two class rooms. The basement was converted into a kitchen and dining area. Additional class rooms and dormitory space for women were located on the second floor. The entire third floor was devoted to dormitory space for women. A horse stable sat at the rear of the property. Eventually it was converted into a small gymnasium and meeting hall. In the first year of operation in Founders Hall the School had 52 full time and 393 part time students.

The first expansion to additional facilities came in 1928. Another stable nearby was purchased and it was soon converted to a studio for art instruction. Founders Hall continued with its original uses until 1931, when arrangements were made for the purchase of the first sizable facility other than Founders Hall. This was another large former residence with stable and outbuildings located across Shafer Street west of Founders Hall. This building had housed the Richmond City Public Library for several years, and the purchase was made from the City of Richmond.

One of the several financial arrangements made to support the purchase of the City Library building and provide funds for additional purchases and renovation was the conversion of Founders Hall exclusively to dormitory use. According to Dr. Hibbs, room rental rates were set so that funds above and beyond operating expenses would be available.

From the early 1930's through the 1960's Founders Hall was used primarily as dorm space for female students. Through this use the building derives much of its history, legend and lore. The "additions" at the rear of the building were built as additional female dormitory space under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of the Roosevelt Administration in the 1930's.

Several other WPA projects resulted in buildings and improvements to the campus, including an attic conversion project in Founders Hall, which provided even more dormitory space. A drawing copied from the April, 1940, Bulletin of Richmond Professional Institute shows all Institute-owned structures at the time (see Exhibit V). All faced Franklin Street looking north with the exception of "The Dean's House" (insert - Exhibit V), which was across Franklin Street facing south, about a quarter block west of Shafer Street. In the center of the drawing is Founders Hall, showing the three-story dormitory additions at the rear built under the WPA.

Legends

As noted above, the building early on came to have the identity of a "dormitory." As early as 1928 a photograph in the Institute's Bulletin refers to it as "The Dormitory," and in 1931 the first student annual, The Wigwam, carried the same photograph and commented on what a modern, up to date facility it was (see Exhibit VI). It is interesting to compare this photograph with one included in the Epes and Nicholson study, which they say came from the Valentine Museum of the History of Richmond (see Exhibit VII). Other than the street light, pole and electrical wires in the Valentine photo, they appear identical. However, the Valentine photo retains a wider angle and shows the rear of the building without the additions and some sense of the location and size of the stable at the rear.

In 1934, one edition of the official in-house newspaper, The Atlas, notes that an "open house" is held every Saturday evening of the school year in one of the drawing rooms on the first floor. A small photograph accompanying the article appears to show a space with two chairs and a table with a lamp on it next to one of the bay windows. The female residents of The Dormitory were likely swept away with excitement when they read in the April 4, 1944, edition of The Postscript, the student-run newspaper, that Founders Hall was used for a brief period during World War I as an officers' club and that a weekly dance was held there.

After reviewing Dr. Hibbs' book, the reader is left with the unmistakable impression that the greatest legend of all associated with Founders Hall was Mrs. Virgie A. Chalkley, who served

as "hostess" from 1926 to 1952: "Her title was hostess but her duties in many respects were like that of what is now called a director of student activities." Although Hibbs' book has many anecdotes, I believe my favorite is the story of Mrs. Chalkley's attempts to dissuade "prowlers" and "peeping Toms" from lurking outside her Founders Hall women's dormitory. According to Hibbs, as younger women began to attend the institution, "prowlers and peepers were a source of complaint. To stop this, a tall chainlink fence was built around the side and in the rear of Founders Hall, the only dormitory at that time. This did not stop the prowlers and peepers. Then a circular iron device like a fan, with sharpened spikes, was added. . . . The iron, fan-like device, with its sharpened spikes still may be seen in the rear of the dormitory over which she presided with so much tact and good judgment for such a long time." (see Exhibit IV)

Another interesting story about the building relates to the times of the Depression in the 1930's. As noted above, the institution took advantage of building programs under the WPA. Dr. Hibbs remarks that many students were employed during this time under the National Youth Administration (NYA), "which provided jobs for students in various types of part-time work . . ." Under this program at the institution there was an artist's project, which employed a graduate student to paint a mural on the wall of the rear lobby of Founders Hall. It depicted a social work student traveling to rural Hanover County, Virginia, in a model T Ford to conduct field work. The car was purchased second hand by the institution in 1926. This graduate student later became a faculty member at Richmond Professional Institute and, eventually, Chairman of the Department of Art History. Dr. Hibbs says this mural is " . . still on one of the walls of Founders Hall . . ." This book was published in 1973. In my interior walk-through and study of Founders Hall this month I could not find the painting. I consulted with some "very long-time" University employees. They remembered the mural and showed me where it was (just inside the entry doors on the Shafer Street side). They informed me that it was there until the interior renovation project of the mid-1980's, noted above. They also pointed out that an elevator shaft and elevator was installed in the same general area, but to the best of their recollection, the mural was not destroyed but probably plastered or painted over. Chances are it is still there.

Problems of Historical Study

The problem of good sources is the greatest obstacle to reconstruction, analysis and interpretation. I am fortunate to have had a "house history" to use, the author of which was the institution's chief administrative officer during most of the building's significant history; to find that he placed a fair amount of emphasis on the building I am studying; to discover a students' historical architecture and design study of the building; to be able to access some official university studies and reports; and to learn that the Special Collections and Archives Unit of the University Library System has a file on this building.

Each of these sources has limitations, and it challenges the historical investigator more than usual perhaps to be very careful about drawing conclusions from the "evidence." House histories are usually "officially sanctioned" by the institution (which was the case with Dr. Hibbs' work), and can be expected to cast the best light on historical events and exclude some that may not be so positive. Similar to "nostalgia" works on institutional history, house histories may be substantially anecdotal and without reference to primary source documentation. However, depending on how and by whom they are written, house histories and nostalgia pieces have some value to the extent the user can rely on them as first-hand accounts by "eyewitnesses."

In a similar manner there is potentially some value in bulletins, catalogues, student and house newspapers, and year books as source documents. However, these may have limited reference to specific campus buildings, and they tend to be intentionally "positive" in tone and presentation, overlooking the negative and unseemly, with the possible exception of student-controlled newspapers.

Official institutional studies and reports tend to be fairly narrow and technical in focus and usually deal with one aspect of a building, such as repair and renovation costs, or analysis of alternative uses of existing space. They usually do not include historical data and background to any extent on any particular building.

The particular structure I chose has some unique problems and opportunities in reconstruction and interpretation because it was an existing structure with a non-educational use and a history of its own before the institution purchased and occupied it. This was a benefit to me because there was some independent, non-institutional documentation available on its history and usage. Also, some of the history and traditions that came with the structure were carried forward into the years after the institution took control of it. To a certain extent it seems the institution tried to "remember" and enhance the building's past and to transform some of it into a part of the institution's tradition and lore.

Finally, an obstacle to thorough investigation is that existing documents, as well as secondary works and other studies, tend to describe and chronicle the physical aspects of the building's life rather than the personal, functional, social and human histories associated with it.

Secondary Sources

All primary and secondary sources consulted for this report are listed in the Bibliography. I was able to find one secondary source dealing specifically with the building - the architectural history and design study by Epes and Nicholson. Another secondary source has a substantial number of references to the building but is primarily a broad institutional historical narrative - A History of the Richmond Professional Institute by Dr. Henry H. Hibbs.

As far as my report goes, the study by Epes and Nicholson was useful only for the history of the building before the institution purchased and occupied it, and for its analysis of the style and detail of the original architecture. While its report on the early history of the building seems fairly reliable, the user must proceed with some caution because the study has some limitations in its presentation of fact and interpretation. The study's strength is that it reviews and summarizes original deed records and similar documentation at the offices of the City of Richmond, the Virginia State Library, the Valentine Museum of the History of the City of Richmond, the State Division of Historic Landmarks, and the Virginia Historical Society.

It presents some good evidence on who owned the property when Founders Hall was constructed and the year of construction. Remarkably, their findings document, at the correct city street address, the purchase - first by the School of Social Work and Public Health and later by The College of William and Mary. However, they conclude that, "There is a conflict of ownership . .", and, "There seems to be a discrepancy as to what location was, in fact, 827 W. Franklin. . ." because they could not find an E. A. Saunders listed as owner.

This is where the authors' failure to be thorough enough in their investigation may have led to an incorrect conclusion. First, they spell the name incorrectly in their report - they spell it Sauders. Second, they apparently did not consult Dr. Hibbs' book for the general history of the building as their starting point. In the body of their study and in their bibliography the only general institutional history they refer to is Virginius Dabney's Virginia Commonwealth University: A Sesquicentennial History, published in 1987. Dabney's passing reference to Founders Hall is based on Dr. Hibbs' account, as Dabney clearly reveals. Mr. Dabney notes that the original residence was built by E. A. Saunders, but he omits Dr. Hibbs' reference to the fact that the initials "E. A. S." are etched in glass above the front entry way. Had the authors of the architectural history and design study known this they could have checked and seen for themselves, as I did, that indeed the initials are there. Also, it is important to note that the study by Epes and Nicholson in 1991 failed to include an architectural analysis and history of the additions that were added to the rear of Founders Hall in the 1930's.

Dr. Hibbs' History was the other most useful secondary source for my investigation. As noted previously, this work is limited primarily by the fact that it's a house history with neither significant documentation of sources nor reference to other primary materials for further investigation. This book, however, is a substantial source for the lore and legend of the institution and is valuable as a chronology of the many anecdotes and incidental events that help fill in the human detail of the institution's history. It is clearly the best source of information I could find on the institution and, especially, for the beginnings, early uses, and evolution of Founders Hall.

Although institutional histories and memoirs must be used with caution because of their inherent bias, I find no reason not to accept Dr. Hibbs' account as accurate and substantially complete.

The Institution's Distinctive Historic Personality

Virginia Commonwealth University today seems to place considerable emphasis on its historic character and heritage. This is evident in many of its public service announcements and advertisements, official publications such as catalogues and informational literature, and in the public comments of its leaders. Being located in a "historic" city and state, it seems natural if not mandatory that the University should do so.

The distinctive historical image it projects seems to be one of prestige and honor along with somewhat humble beginnings. It is only since 1968 that the University has existed but it claims its origin to be the founding of the Medical College of Virginia in 1838. This is the year that appears on the official Virginia Commonwealth University logo.

Most of the historical high points seem to be associated with the education and training provided to the medical profession. What seems to be most prominent in the University's projection of its historical image are the famous doctors and surgeons who either trained or taught at the Medical College of Virginia; the medical "firsts" that were accomplished there; and the linking of this history somehow with the prestige, honor, respect, and awe that many people hold for the medical profession. For example, the dates of procedures such as transplants that were first successfully completed there appear prominently in University historical sketches, as do well-known awards and honors to individual faculty members and former students. While these may be desirable images to promote, this approach downplays the historic role, character and contribution of the non-medical components of the institution, such as the programs that grew on the West Campus after the Richmond School of Social Work and Public Health moved west to Franklin Street.

Second in prominence seems to be the University's effort to project itself as a preserver of historic buildings and at least the character of historic neighborhoods while expanding classroom,

research and administrative space. This obviously is almost a requirement in a history-conscious city such as Richmond. The University has expended considerable time, effort, and money to plan and implement historic building preservation and renovation, such as Founders Hall, on both campuses and to grow around and through existing neighborhoods and structures rather than overwhelm them.

Historic Character, Contemporary Educational Mission, and Institutional Identity

As stated in official publications, the University's educational mission is very broad and multi-faceted, which is often the case with today's large, complex "multi-versities." However, somewhat unique to this mission seem to be such things as orientation to "the urban environment" and providing "flexible scheduling for part-time undergraduate and graduate students." While Virginia Commonwealth University is known increasingly for its strengths in health sciences research and education in the fine and applied arts, its traditional mission seems to address education in an urban environment and the supervision of a large teaching hospital providing acute patient care and services to those who cannot otherwise afford it within the urban area and throughout central Virginia.

While part of this mission is health science oriented, much of it is aimed at a broader core of urban services and educational programs for those who live in and near the urban environment. Considering this, it seems the University might profitably re-orient its historic image away from a primary emphasis on professional medical training and care and more toward the emphasis represented by Richmond Professional Institute. It is interesting to note that the Institute's foundations were in the fields of social work and public health, areas that certainly are allies of the medical sciences. In addition, Dr. Hibbs and the early programs adopted at the Institute had a strong orientation toward problems of the urban environment and education suited to addressing urban needs. Dr. Hibbs himself received his undergraduate and graduate education in sociology and social work at Brown, the Boston School for Social Workers, and Columbia, all of which were urban environments. A re-orientation of image could also include the fact that what was to

become Richmond Professional Institute started in downtown Richmond, some students from the Medical College of Virginia attended classes at the Richmond School for Social Workers and Public Health, and for a time the School was located on property near the Medical College within what is now the confines of the East or Health Sciences Campus of Virginia Commonwealth University.

Sources of Background and Supplementary Information

All primary and secondary sources consulted for this report are listed in the Bibliography. In general I found four types of sources for this study: house histories and institutional memoirs; a secondary report on the building prepared by two University students for a class in the design of historic architecture, interiors, and furnishings; miscellaneous "first-hand" accounts from the period under review, such as student newspaper articles and year books; and other "official" University documents and reports, such as catalogues, bulletins, space analyses, and a description of planned building renovation needs and costs.

As noted previously, the primary weakness of the house histories and memoirs is their inherent bias toward the positive and the upbeat and their lack of source documentation. The house history by Hibbs, however, was the single most important source of information for this report, primarily because of its store of anecdotal data, legend and lore. In a previous section of this report, "Secondary Sources," I provide an analysis of the strengths and weakness of the architectural study by Epes and Nicholson.

Fortunately, I found a collection of catalogues, bulletins, year books and in-house and student newspapers for Richmond Professional Institute and its predecessors in the Special Collections and Archives Unit of the University Library System. These seemed to be reliable sources but were of limited value because specific references to Founders Hall were rather limited. However, they were useful for photographs and drawings of the building and campus at various times throughout the institution's history and for selected references to Founders Hall from the point of view of legend, lore and "popular notions" of the building and its role in the life of the

institution. Finally, official University reports were of value in documenting the size of the building, the floor plan and the University's definition and concept of the interior renovation of Founders Hall carried out in the mid 1980's.

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Exhibit I.

Exhibit II.

BULLETIN

RICHMOND DIVISION

COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

VOLUME IV. SEPTEMBER, 1928 No. 3

Announcement of

Courses in

Fine and

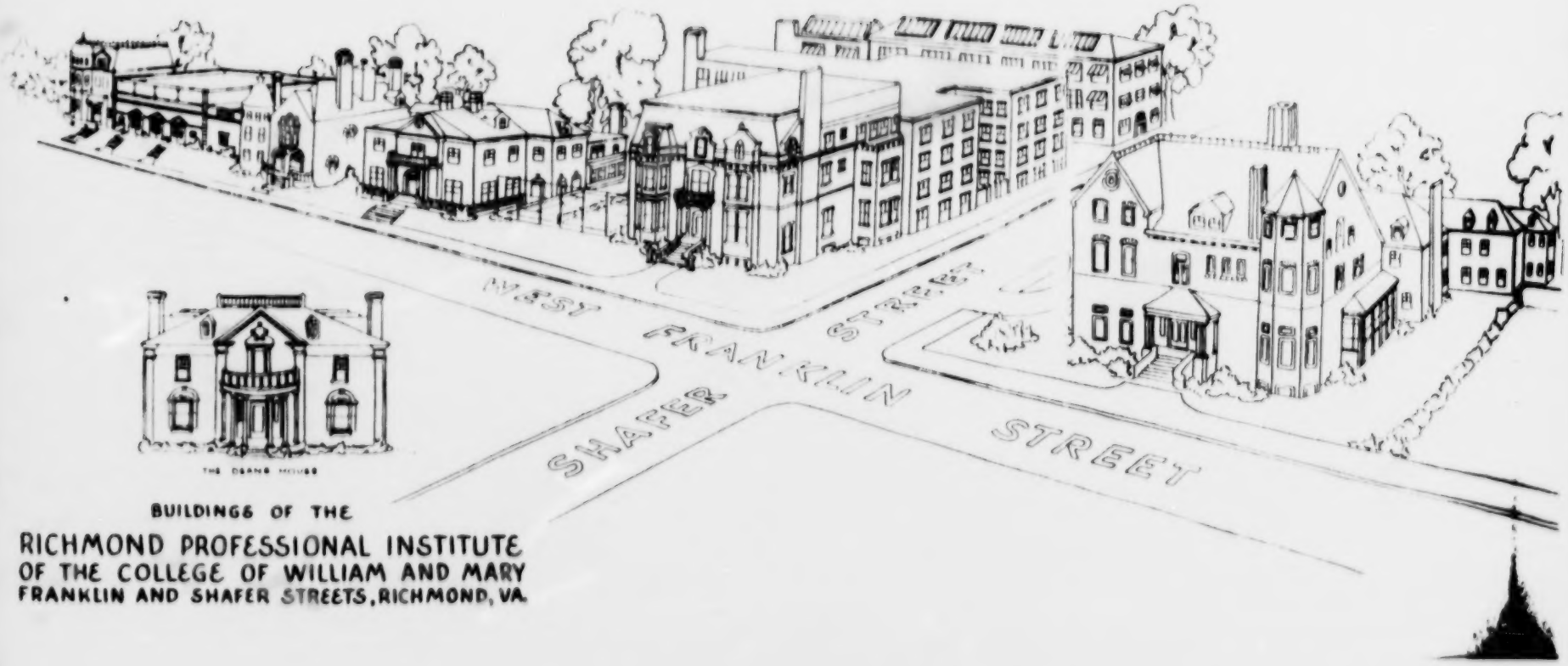
Applied Arts

Music

Dramatics

Exhibit III.

Exhibit IV.



BUILDINGS OF THE
RICHMOND PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTE
OF THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY
FRANKLIN AND SHAFER STREETS, RICHMOND, VA.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FOUNDER'S HALL — THE DORMITORY

Exhibit VI.

827 West Franklin Street
Founders' Hall

Source: The Valentine Museum

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Exhibit VII.